

## **SUMMARY**

### **SSI DISABLED WORKERS, MARCH 1997**

In March 1997, there were 309,745 SSI disabled beneficiaries who were working (5.9 percent of the total SSI disabled caseload). Included in this count were 48,194 section 1619(b) participants who do not receive an SSI payment, but who have special SSI recipient status for Medicaid purposes. Almost eight out of ten (77.9 percent) of the workers had amounts of earned income below the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level of \$500 per month; 31.9 percent earned \$65 or less.

Among the States, the percentage of disabled workers varied from a low of 2.7 percent in Alabama to a high of 18.3 percent in Iowa. In general, the percentage of disabled workers was higher in the Northern States than in the Southern States.

Most of these disabled workers were: white--68.0 percent, and male--54.3 percent. Almost half (47.3 percent) had unearned income; 40.2 percent were receiving social security benefits. Comparable figures for all disabled recipients in March 1997 were: 47.2 percent white, 45.4 percent male, and 30.5 percent receiving social security benefits.

Disabled workers are more likely to have certain impairments than other disabled recipients. Three-fourths (74.7 percent) of the workers had a mental disorder, including 49.8 percent who were diagnosed with mental retardation. This compares to 58.8 percent of all disabled recipients with a mental disorder, including 28.4 percent with mental retardation.

The greatest use of work incentive provisions was by participants under section 1619—25.6 percent of disabled workers. This included 10.1 percent under section 1619(a), and 15.6 percent under section 1619(b).

Use of other work incentive provisions continued to have a smaller, but measurable, impact. In March 1997, 5.7 percent of the SSI disabled workers had some of their income excluded under one of these provisions---plan for achieving self support (PASS), (1.2 percent); impairment related work expenses (IRWE), (3.2 percent), or blind work expenses (BWE), (1.4 percent).

A PASS permits an SSI recipient to set aside income and resources to help obtain the training or education necessary for certain specified occupational goals. In March 1997, 1,521 PASS participants had earnings, which averaged \$590 per month. However, exclusions under a PASS are not limited to earnings. Of the 3,787 disabled recipients with a PASS, more than half (59.8 percent) did not have any earnings reported for March 1997. For this group, the PASS excluded unearned income such as social security benefits.